

AGENDA

Working Group to Develop Solutions to Meet the Needs for Municipal Volunteer Personnel - Established by Resolve 2015, chapter 49

Meeting #3, Tuesday, November 17, 2015, 9:30am

Room 209, Cross State Office Building, Augusta

- Welcome

Senator Linda Baker, Senate Chair

Representative Michel Lajoie, House Chair

- Introduction of members of the Working Group to Develop Solutions to Meet the Needs for Municipal Volunteer Personnel

- Review of information and materials provided for meeting #3

Options for continuing the existence of the working group or overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of the working group

Information on increases in tobacco taxes and alcohol taxes, revenues roughly anticipated from increases at certain levels

Deirdre Schneider and Jane Orbeton, Office of Policy and Legal Analysis

- Review and decisions on recommendations regarding recruitment, training and retention of municipal volunteers

- Public comment period

- Discussion of process for drafting and approving the report of the working group

Working Group to Develop Solutions to Meet the Needs for Municipal Volunteer Personnel

Resolve 2015, chapter 49, Meeting #2, November 3, 2015

Meeting Notes

Attending: Senator Linda Baker, Representative Michel Lajoie, Representative Timothy Theriault, William Gillespie and Jeffrey Cammack. Absent: Anthony Russo. Michael Barker resigned prior to the meeting. Staff present: Deirdre Schneider and Jane Orbeton, Office of Policy and Legal Analysis.

The second meeting of the Working Group to Develop Solutions to Meet the Needs for Municipal Volunteer Personnel was held on November 3rd in Augusta. The meeting included the following speakers and discussions:

- **Chief Robert Posick, Calais Fire Department**, spoke of the Calais Fire Department which provides fire and emergency medical services and is staffed by full-time, part-time and call-in personnel. Chief Posick spoke of the connections between recruitment, training and retention and of the positive value of specialty training and Length of Service programs. (Berwick and South Portland have operating Length of Service programs.) He asked for regional training, offering accredited classes by experienced trainers. He spoke in favor of training, even at municipal expense and even if newly trained personnel move to another community, done regionally and possibly with a centralized academy. He spoke of the positive relationship between his department and Washington County Community College and the St Croix Regional Technical Center. He spoke of the positive impact of active community involvement, close work with high schools and the vocational technical school. Chief Posick stressed the importance of very good training, with good food, the value of retirement benefits and Length of Service programs and the benefits of treating personnel as family. Chief Posick mentioned the good relationships Calais has with municipalities in their mutual aid agreement and of the automatic response agreement and coordinated training with St Stephen, New Brunswick.
- **Firefighter Robert Cousins of the Calais Fire Department**, spoke of his experience signing up and getting trained, of his continuing outreach to students and younger residents of Washington County, and of the benefits to the whole state of trained personnel even if they move from the community in which they were trained to a new community. Firefighter Cousins mentioned that specialty courses attract firefighters and help to maintain a level of interest.
- **Chief Nate Schools, Buxton Fire Department**, discussed his interest in paramedic/firefighting from his high school days, his training and experience as a live-in firefighter in Gorham, his work with the live-in program at the present and the importance of grant funding for the program. He discussed outreach, open houses, the Safer program (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response), scholarships and the possibility of student loan forgiveness, and the importance of training being held locally and being affordable.

The chairs, Senator Baker and Representative Lajoie, welcomed members of the public who attended the meeting and invited their participation. These attendees included Shaun St. Germain, Director, Maine Emergency Medical Services, Pamela Megathlin and Michael LaPlante, Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Standards, Garret Corbin, Maine Municipal Association, Walter Morse, Chief, Jefferson Fire Department, Fred Bowers, Town of Alna Fire Department Recruitment Committee, Jeff Maker, retired call firefighter, Calais Fire Department and Jim Grenier, Somerville Volunteer Fire Department.

Working group members discussed the following issues:

1. The possibility of training costs that were paid for a firefighter/EMT by one municipality then being repaid to that original municipality by a municipality that later hires the trained person.
2. The importance of strong leadership in recruitment, training and retention and the possibility of required training or certification for officers and chiefs.
3. The possibility of alcohol and/or tobacco tax increases to pay for initiatives supported by the working group.
4. The importance of strong community relationships and local public relations initiatives to recruitment, retention and adequate funding.
5. Changing Maine EMS licensure requirements to enable veterans with combat medic experience to qualify for licensure.
6. The proposal under consideration in Maine EMS to require emergency medical service vehicles that are transporting a patient from one hospital to another hospital to utilize a driver who is qualified as an EMT.

Information distributed at the meeting: Deirdre and Jane discussed with the working group information on municipal volunteer recruitment, training and retention initiatives from other states and from Congress and data from Maine Municipal Association and the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission. Members of the working group discussed the suggestions for working group priorities submitted to Deirdre and Jane. Pamela Megathlin, DOL, provided a handout entitled *Fact or Fiction for Fire Departments*, a copy of which will be posted online with working group materials. Walter Morse, Chief of the Jefferson Fire Department, provided a handout entitled *Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Ideas You Can Use*, a copy of which will be posted online with working group materials. This article addresses public relations and marketing, recruitment strategies, promotion of volunteerism, partnerships with local businesses, community involvement, youth programs, media relations, leadership and benefits for volunteer personnel and improving Insurance Service Office grading levels in order to lower fire insurance rates.

Information requests: Members of the working group requested that Deirdre and Jane obtain the following information for the meeting on November 17: (1) information on options for continuing the working group, (2) information on tobacco tax and alcohol tax increases to be used as funding sources for working group initiatives.

Future meeting: The final meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, November 17 at 9:30am in Room 209 of the Cross Office Building in Augusta.

Options for Legislation regarding the Working Group

1. **Pass a resolve or enact unallocated law to amend the duties of the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission for 2017 (or 2017 and 2018) to include:**
 - A. Overseeing implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group to Develop Solutions to Meet the Needs for Municipal Volunteers;
 - B. Submitting reports on implementation as part of the commission's annual reports in December 2017 (or 2017 and 2018); and
 - C. Authorizing the formation of a subcommittee to oversee implementation and to report to the MFPSC.

2. **Pass a new resolve in 2016 to re-authorize the Working Group to Develop Solutions to Meet the Needs for Municipal Volunteers as follows:**
 - A. Keep the resolve identical to Resolve 2015, chapter 49 except for authorizing meetings during 2016 (or 2016 and 2017) and reporting December 2, 2016 (or 2016 and 2017); or
 - B. Keep the resolve identical to Resolve 2015, chapter 49 except for revising the duties to limit them to oversight of implementation and reporting on implementation; or
 - C. Make the resolve identical to chapter 49 and add the duty to oversee implementation of the recommendations of the working group.

Possible Tax Increases – Very rough estimates

1. Tobacco taxes

Tobacco taxes are established in Title 36, chapters 703 and 704.

The cigarette tax is \$2.00 per package of 20 cigarettes. An increase of 5% is an increase of \$.10 per package. An increase to \$2.10 per package is roughly estimated to produce increased revenues of \$6,600,000/year.

The taxes on loose smoking tobacco, pipe tobacco and cigars and smokeless tobacco are usually raised when the cigarette tax is increased. Revenue from a corresponding increase in these taxes is roughly estimated to produce increased revenues of \$660,000/yr.

These estimates do not account for potential decreases in demand.

2. Alcohol taxes

Alcohol taxes are established in Title 28-A, chapter 65.

The tax on non-sparkling wine is now \$.60 per gallon. A 5% increase would increase the tax to \$.63 per gallon.

Raising the alcohol taxes by 5% is roughly estimated to produce increased revenue of \$915,598.

This estimate does not account for potential decreases in demand.

Orbeton, Jane

From: Michel A. Lajoie <lajoie1@midmaine.com>
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2015 3:49 PM
To: Orbeton, Jane; Linda Baker
Subject: FW: WG Municipal Volunteer Personnel

Good afternoon Jane,

I thought I would forward this email I received from Charlie Soltan so that we could have it for tomorrow's meeting.

Rep. Mike Lajoie

From: Charles Soltan [mailto:Charles.Soltan@SoltanBass.com]
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2015 2:57 PM
To: LaJoie, Michel; bakersenate14@yahoo.com
Subject: WG Municipal Volunteer Personnel

Good Afternoon Linda & Mike. Sorry for interrupting a beautiful afternoon, but I wanted to mention that I have reviewed the Agenda and information for the Working Group's meeting tomorrow. I'm sorry I cannot be there tomorrow but wanted to point out some issues with using the taxes proposed for the funding. As you know I am a member of the Fire Commission so it is not comfortable pointing these out as I'm very supportive of the LOSP programs. But it is also important to remember that the tobacco tax is only borne by 20% or less of the Maine population, the percentage that smokes. This is a very small slice of the Maine citizenry. And frankly they generally fall in the bottom economic half of the taxpaying community so I wonder whether this is fair and equitable to use.

The alcohol tax falls over a range of beverages. As to spirits (Owned by the State and distributed through Maine Spirits/Pine State Trading), it is untimely to impact/raise these taxes due to the efforts of the State to claw back sales made in New Hampshire by Maine residents. BABLO and Pine State are in a very serious effort to return these sales to Maine for the benefit of all Maine taxpayers. Any increase in the tax on spirits would be very detrimental to this effort. So I caution you on targeting alcohol taxes, and the spirits tax specifically, as a means to fund recruitment and retention projects.

I also understand that some are looking to the Fire Investigation & Training insurance premium tax to fund these same programs. But as Mike knows, raising or raiding that tax is detrimental to the Fire Marshal's Office, the Maine Fire Service Institute and also results in a "Retaliatory" tax on Maine based insurance companies selling policies outside of Maine (a number of them). As a result of the Retaliatory tax, these Maine insurance companies are subject to higher taxes in, for example, New Hampshire because NH retaliates for the higher Maine tax its NH insurers must pay by taxing Maine companies selling Homeowners policies in NH. And those Maine companies cannot charge the NH policyholder because of the effect of insurance taxation. So it becomes a huge penalty to Maine companies, 2 of whom are located in Lewiston/Auburn and other ones in Yarmouth & Presque Isle, to name just a few.

I know this is confusing, but taxation policy is never easy. And these proposals have a number of complications and negative impacts outside of the realm of the volunteer world. I'm glad to answer any questions, and I'm sorry I cannot attend tomorrow. Thanks for the time. All the best, Charlie

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Suggested priorities reorganized by type of action required - (Recruitment = RC, Training = T, Retention = RT)

Law	
Provide benefits to FF and EMT volunteers	RC, RT
Bell-to-bell coverage through workers' compensation or insurance	RC, RT
Tax credits at state level	RC, RT
Eligibility for State Employee Health Insurance program	RC, RT
Fund LOSP	RC, RT
Forgive student loans	RC, RT
Provide retirement benefits that are transferrable	RC, RT
Fund a PR campaign , using PSA's, media, social media and community outreach to publicize need for FF and EMT volunteers, volunteer opportunities and build support and interest in volunteering	RC
Expand courses and financial aid for FF and EMT's in tech schools and community colleges	RC
Central State Fire Academy, regional training facilities	T
Fund grants for municipalities to obtain equipment and pay for training costs	T
Fund 2 or 3 volunteer coordinators to build online and in-person training	T
Statewide database in DOL to show available training courses and trainers and personnel records	T
Law limiting liability for volunteers, commanders and chiefs	RT
Provide for re-authorization of working group or oversight of recommendations of working group	
Fund 1 Fire Marshal position to work with departments, provide data	
MEMA take over MEMS	
Resolve or unallocated law	
Direct DOL BLS, OSFM and MEMS to work on training with chiefs, FF and EMT's to adopt uniform training by volunteer position (perhaps including the chief), testing and hiring standards and requirements that make training relevant, affordable and easy to access and provide a clear career path	RC, T
Employer incentives so that volunteers may respond to calls, to be developed by DOL BLS, FF, EMT's, employers and insurers	RT
Class rating system for response to a call to be developed by MEMS, fire chiefs, FF and EMT's	RT
Evaluate Maine Forest Service capacity to respond to climate changing fire	
Encourage municipalities to consider action	
Provide benefits to FF and EMT volunteers	RC, RT
Menu of benefits to choose from, including stipends for travel and expenses, funding LOSP	RC, RT
Fund a PR campaign , using PSA's, media, social media and community outreach to publicize need for FF and EMT volunteers, identified volunteer opportunities and build support and interest.	RC
Expand junior firefighter programs , offering academic credit	RC
Work toward a well-run department in which leadership and training are strong, morale is high, service and activity requirements are uniform and clearly communicated, new personnel are supported, community involvement is a priority, public is aware of proper use of department and recruitment is an ongoing effort by all members	RC, RT
Work with local fire unions to enable career firefighters to volunteer with local fire departments	RC
Pursue insurance and third-party reimbursement for FF and EMT services	RT
Municipalities cooperate on training , reciprocal training requirements, volunteer relocation	T
Clear chain of command and operational procedures for mutual aid calls	RT
Expand full-time daytime FF and EMT coverage , fund chiefs and volunteer coordinators	RT
Provide liability insurance to cover volunteers, commanders and chiefs	RT
Work with banks and credit unions and businesses to provide benefits for volunteers	RC, RT

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